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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 SEOUL 08508

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CHEROKEE

DECAPTIONED

E.O. 12065: RDS-1 7/2/00 (GLEYSTEN, W.H.) OR-M

TAGS: PGOV, PEPR, SHUM, PINT, KS, US

SUBJECT: ~~KOREA FOCUS: MISCELLANEOUS~~ CONVERSATIONS WITH  
- KOREANS SINCE MY RETURN

1. (S) ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SO WASHINGTON WILL KNOW WHAT LINE I HAVE BEEN TAKING,  
THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS SUMMARIZE BRIEFLY AND IMPRESSION-  
ISTICALLY SOME CONVERSATIONS I HAVE HAD SINCE RETURNING  
TO SEOUL.3. AT A DINNER HOSTED BY GENERAL WICKHAM IN HONOR OF  
GENERAL MEYER JUNE 30, MND MINISTER CHOO YOUNG BOCK (M-R:  
CHU YONG-POK) PROBED VERY HARD ABOUT SECRETARY MUSKIE'S  
REACTION TO THE KOREAN SITUATION. ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF  
LEE HUI-SUNG (M-R: YI HUI-SONG) AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY  
DEFENSE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN MUN HYONG-TAE (M-R: MUN HYONG-  
T'AE) LISTENED ON THE SIDE; GENERAL MEYER AND GENERAL  
WICKHAM JOINED IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE DISCUSSION. I  
SAID THE SECRETARY FULLY APPRECIATED THE IMPORTANCE OF  
OUR SECURITY AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH THE ROK AND HAD  
ASKED ME TO AFFIRM OUR COMMITMENT UNAMBIGUOUSLY. AT THE  
SAME TIME HE FELT THAT OUR LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP WITH

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KOREA WOULD BE UNDERCUT IF THE NEW GOVERNMENT FAILED TO  
ACHIEVE POPULAR SUPPORT. TO PUT IT BLUNTLY, THE SECRETARY  
LACKED CONFIDENCE IN THE CURRENT POLITICAL PROGRAM AND  
DOUBTED THE GOVERNMENT WOULD ACHIEVE PUBLIC ACCEPTANCEUNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: CHARLES E LAHIGUERA  
DATE/CASE ID: 17 JAN 2012 201101232

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4. CHOO ASKED WHAT WE WANTED. I SAID IT WAS NOT A MATTER OF WHAT WE WANTED, BUT OF WHAT THE KOREAN PEOPLE WOULD FIND ACCEPTABLE; ONLY KOREANS COULD DEVISE AN APPROPRIATE PROGRAM. PRESSED FURTHER BY CHOO, I SAID THAT I ASSUMED THE KOREAN PEOPLE'S LONG-TERM REACTION WOULD DEPEND ON WHETHER THE NEW AUTHORITIES WERE ABLE TO RUN THE ECONOMY SUCCESSFULLY, WERE ABLE TO ENCOURAGE MORE POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION THAN EXISTED TODAY, AND DEVISED A CONSTITUTION AND PERMITTED ITS RATIFICATION UNDER CONDITIONS WHICH APPEARED REASONABLE TO A MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE. HOPEFULLY THE CURRENT WAVE OF ARRESTS AND PURIFICATIONS WOULD BE BROUGHT TO AN EARLY CONCLUSION.

5. CHOO ASKED WHAT WAS WRONG WITH PRESIDENT CHOI'S PROMISED POLITICAL TIMETABLE. I SAID THE TIMETABLE WAS FINE, BUT IT LEFT LARGE QUESTIONS AS TO WHAT KIND OF A CONSTITUTION WOULD BE INVOLVED, UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS IT WOULD BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL, AND WHAT KIND OF GOVERNMENT WOULD LATER BE ELECTED. WE TALKED AT SOME LENGTH ABOUT THE DANGER OF BEING TOO HARSH ON KIM DAE JUNG (M-R: KIM TAE-CHUNG) AND THE PROBLEMS OF HOLDING A REFERENDUM UNDER MARTIAL LAW. IN THE END CHOO SAID THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN KOREA WAS MAINTENANCE OF LAW AND ORDER -- I COMMENTED SEMI-HUMOROUSLY THAT IF THAT WERE SUCH AN OVERRIDING CONSIDERATION HE SHOULD TAKE A CAREFUL LOOK AT THE NORTH KOREAN MODEL. MY IM-  
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PRESSION IS THAT MUN MORE OR LESS AGREED WITH WHAT I HAD TO SAY, CHOO AGREED WITH PART OF IT, AND LEE WOULD NOT HAVE EVEN IF MORE OF THE CONVERSATION HAD BEEN TRANSLATED.

6. EARLIER IN THE DAY I HAD A PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH JHANG-NAE SOHN (M-R: SON CHANG-NAE), ROK COS IN WASHINGTON. AFTER GETTING SOHN TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT CHUN DOO HWAN (M-R: CHON TU-HWAN) AND COMPANY WERE SEEKING FORMAL POLITICAL POWER, I DESCRIBED OUR REACTION ALONG THE LINES OF MY COMMENTS TO MINISTER CHOO. SOHN UNDERSTOOD MY POINTS CLEARLY. ALTHOUGH I KNOW HIS DESIRE TO ACCOMMODATE HIMSELF TO THE NEW ORDER IS PARAMOUNT, I THINK HE IS QUITE SYMPATHETIC AND PROBABLY USES OUR VIEWS TO A LIMITED EXTENT IN HIS CONTACTS WITH CHUN AND OTHERS. IN HIS CASE, I COMPLAINED ABOUT MANIPULATION OF ANTI-

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I DESCRIBED WHAT I HAD SAID LAST WEEK TO KWANG SOO CHOI (M-R: CH'OE KWANG-SU) AND CHUN DOO HWAN AND PROVIDED EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOR I CONSIDERED INCOMPATIBLE WITH A FRIENDLY RELATIONSHIP. SOHN'S ANSWER WAS SIMILAR TO CHUN DOO HWAN'S -- I.E., WHETHER OR NOT ROK AUTHORITIES WERE GUILTY AS CHARGED, CHUN HAD TOLD HIM THERE WOULD BE NO PROBLEM IN THE FUTURE. I EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM AND URGED THAT SOHN EMPHASIZE THE POINT DURING HIS LAST MEETING WITH CHUN. I ALSO HIT HIM HARD ON THE SUBJECT OF NOT EXECUTING KIM DAE JUNG.

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7. DURING GENERAL MEYER'S COURTESY CALLS ON PRESIDENT AND ACTING PRIMIN JULY 1, THE PRESIDENT ENGAGED IN A FILIBUSTER WHICH OFFERED NO REAL OPPORTUNITY TO WEIGH IN ON

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POLITICAL ISSUES IN A SERIOUS WAY. ACTING PRIMIN CHOONG HOON PARK (M-R: PAK CH'UNG-HUN) OFFERED A BETTER TARGET BY GOING ON AT SOME LENGTH ABOUT THE NEED FOR STRENGTHENING THE ROK'S ANTI-COMMUNIST POSTURE, PLACING SECURITY ABOVE ALL, AND THEN ASKING MY IMPRESSION OF THE SECRETARY'S VIEWS. I SAID THE SECRETARY HAD ASKED ME TO EMPHASIZE THE FIRMNESS OF OUR SECURITY COMMITMENT BUT HAD ALSO EXPRESSED REAL CONCERN OVER THE COURSE OF POLITICAL EVENTS IN THE ROK. HE FELT THE AUTHORITIES

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WOULD HAVE TO DO BETTER THAN THEY HAVE SO FAR IN ACHIEVING ACCEPTANCE AMONG THEIR OWN PEOPLE, WITHOUT WHICH OUR SECURITY RELATIONSHIP COULD NOT BE SUSTAINED IN THE LONG RUN. PARK DID NOT ARGUE.

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8. IN ILLUSTRATING THE NEED TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER AND PURIFY THE COUNTRY OF PUBLIC FIGURES WHO HAD ENGAGED IN "BIG CORRUPTION", THE ACTING PRIMIN MENTIONED THAT

EMPHASIZE THE FIRMNESS OF OUR SECURITY COMMITMENT BUT HAD ALSO EXPRESSED REAL CONCERN OVER THE COURSE OF POLITICAL EVENTS IN THE ROK. HE FELT THE AUTHORITIES WOULD HAVE TO DO BETTER THAN THEY HAVE SO FAR IN ACHIEVING ACCEPTANCE AMONG THEIR OWN PEOPLE, WITHOUT WHICH OUR  
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8. IN ILLUSTRATING THE NEED TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER AND PURIFY THE COUNTRY OF PUBLIC FIGURES WHO HAD ENGAGED IN "BIG CORRUPTION", THE ACTING PRIMIN MENTIONED THAT THERE WOULD BE MORE ARRESTS OF POLITICIANS AND "APPARENTLY" IT MIGHT BE NECESSARY TO CLEAN UP THE PRESS. I CAUTIONED THAT ARRESTS OF PRESS MEMBERS WOULD BE HIGHLY CONTROVERSIAL AND DAMAGE THE ROK'S FOREIGN IMAGE, A POINT WHICH GENERAL MEYER UNDERSCORED. THE CONVERSATION RUN. PARK DID NOT ARGUE.

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